



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

CL/197/SR.1
21 December 2015

Summary records of the Governing Council

197th session

18 and 21 October 2015

Geneva (Centre international de Conférences de Genève)

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First sitting

Sunday, 18 October 2015

The sitting was called to order at 9 a.m., with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Mr. S. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), in the Chair.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (CL/197/A.1)

The agenda, contained in document CL/197/A.1, was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 196th SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (CL/196/SR.1)

The summary records of the 196th session of the Governing Council, contained in document CL/196/SR.1 were approved.

Item 3 of the agenda

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP AND OBSERVER STATUS

(a) Requests for affiliation and reaffiliation to the IPU (CL/197/3(a)-P.1)

The President said that a formal request for reaffiliation had been received from the Parliament of Fiji, set in out document CL/197/3(a)-P.1. He took it that the Governing Council wished to approve that request, which would bring the membership of the IPU to a total of 167 Member Parliaments.

It was so decided.

Ms. J. Luveni (Fiji) thanked the Governing Council for approving Fiji's request for reaffiliation to the IPU, which would be particularly beneficial to Fiji's efforts to pursue parliamentary progress. Fiji had been troubled by political instability for decades. Under the new Constitution, a common national identity had been adopted and public service reforms had taken place. Recent elections had seen the highest voter turnout in Fiji's history, and a record number of women parliamentarians had been elected, including the first woman Speaker. The new Parliament was committed to developing community engagement activities. A parliamentary committee for the Sustainable Development Goals would be established. It was hoped that reaffiliation to the IPU would open the door to technical assistance and exchanges of information and best practices with other Member Parliaments. Lastly, she reaffirmed Fiji's commitment to the IPU goal of establishing democracy and peace.

(b) Situation of certain parliaments

The Secretary General said that the IPU had a mandate to monitor political developments around the world and to ascertain whether the integrity of parliaments was being preserved. As such, it was monitoring the situation in several countries.

In Burkina Faso, a popular uprising had taken place in October 2014 when the President had sought to extend his term of office. Political institutions had been suspended. A coup d'état had been staged in September 2015, thus delaying the planned elections, which had been due to take place in October. The coup had been short-lived and transitional arrangements were back on track; the elections had been postponed until the end of November 2015.

In Burundi, following a failed coup d'état in May 2015, parliamentary elections had taken place and the incumbent President had been elected to serve a third term. Dialogue involving the whole of society was being encouraged to allay concerns and ensure that the democratic process remained on track.

The Central African Republic's membership of the IPU had been suspended for non-payment of assessed contributions. That notwithstanding, the IPU continued to engage with and support the transitional parliament. Despite plans to hold elections in October 2015, political instability, interethnic strife and violence in the capital had caused delays. The IPU had expressed its concern in that regard and offered continued support in the hope that a return to normality could be achieved in the near future.

Egypt had been without a fully functioning parliament since July 2013. The Governing Council had urged the transitional authorities to ensure that the transitional arrangements were followed to the letter. The IPU remained engaged with the authorities and was providing technical assistance to the Secretariat. Elections for a unicameral parliament had begun and would continue until November 2015. A new, fully-fledged parliament would then be convened. The IPU had been the only international organization to provide assistance with the establishment of a new parliamentary institution in Egypt, and it had made clear that its continued support would depend on the smooth running of the elections.

In Haiti, Parliament had ceased to function early in 2015 when the mandates of both houses had lapsed. The first round of elections had been conducted, and the second round was due to take place in the coming days. The IPU would look forward to welcoming the new Haitian Parliament to the 134th Assembly in Lusaka, Zambia.

The situation in Libya was peculiar: despite the election of a new parliament, the transitional parliament had not been dissolved. The Governing Council had previously decided to recognize the newly elected House of Representatives, which was a Member of the IPU. Positive developments had taken place over recent days and a government of national unity had been established. At present, the IPU was unable to fulfil its cooperation agreement with Libya, owing to the security situation.

Progress had been made in Madagascar, where a new National Assembly had been elected for the first time since the coup d'état in 2009. Local council elections had been held, and Senate elections were due to take place shortly.

The situation in Nepal was also positive: a new Constitution had been promulgated and a fully-fledged legislature was in place, which continued to be a Member of the IPU.

The coup in Thailand in 2014 had resulted in the suspension of Parliament and the establishment of a transitional national legislative assembly, which had set out a roadmap for democracy. The IPU urged the transitional authorities to pursue that roadmap meticulously. The process for drafting and approving a new constitution was proving problematic, since the National Reform Council had rejected the draft. A further attempt to draft a constitution had been initiated. A 20-month period would be required to organize elections. The Executive Committee suggested that the situation in Thailand should continue to be monitored and that the IPU should convey a message to the Thai authorities that progress in drafting the constitution was of the utmost importance and that preparations should be made to hold elections in order to ensure a return to normality as soon as possible. The Thai authorities had given assurances that they were committed to expediting the process.

The President informed the Governing Council that he had visited Thailand to make a first-hand assessment of the situation. The drafting of the new constitution was a complex matter that had been ongoing for several months. Although the lack of adherence to the initial roadmap was disappointing, he had been encouraged by the transitional authorities' engagement with the IPU and their assurances that the timeframe of the roadmap would be shortened.

The Secretary General said that Yemen had been in a situation of crisis since 2012. Recently, rebels had overrun the capital and the President had been forced to flee the country. The situation of Parliament was very uncertain and verifying its integrity was extremely difficult, despite the best efforts of the IPU. The IPU would continue its engagement to gain more insight into the status of Parliament in Yemen and would report back to the Governing Council at its next session in Lusaka.

The President, welcoming the positive developments in several countries, said that the IPU would continue to monitor the situations described by the Secretary General and engage with the authorities in the countries concerned. The Governing Council would receive updated information at its next session in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2016.

The Governing Council took note of the situation of certain Members.

(c) Requests for observer status
(CL/197/3(c)-P.1)

The President said that two requests for observer status had been received, from Liberal International and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND). Liberal International had long been present in IPU meetings and granting it observer status would formalize that situation. The IPU had a long history of partnership with PNND, including the publication of a joint handbook and joint organization of several events. He took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the two requests for observer status.

It was so decided.

The President informed the Council that the Executive Committee had examined the situation of an observer, the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community. Its parent intergovernmental organization, the Eurasian Economic Community, had ceased to exist, having been replaced by the Eurasian Economic Union, which had did not have a parliamentary structure. The Executive Committee therefore recommended that the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community should be removed from the list of permanent observers.

It was so decided.

Item 4 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

(a) On his activities since the 196th session of the Governing Council
(CL/197/4(a)-R.1)

The President delivered his report, as contained in document CL/197/4(a)-R.1, highlighting in particular his efforts to engage with Member Parliaments to ensure the inclusion of a parliamentary voice in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The post-2015 development agenda contained a clear reference to the role of parliamentarians. The IPU and its Member Parliaments had worked hard, through lobbying and advocacy among permanent representatives of governments to the United Nations, to ensure the inclusion of a goal on governance among the new SDGs. The time had now come to move from advocacy to action.

He also drew attention to the importance of youth participation and welcomed the IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Tokyo, which would become an annual event. Considerable time and effort had been spent preparing for the 10th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament and the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, which had been particularly successful meetings, and their outcomes had fed into the United Nations Summit. Unfortunately, owing to visa restrictions, the Speaker of Parliament from the Russian Federation had been precluded from participating in the World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. The President of the IPU had issued the following statement with regard to that situation:

“The Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 31 August to 2 September 2015 as part of the series of high-level meetings leading up to the United Nations Summit on the post-2015 development agenda.

It is a matter of deep regret that the Speaker of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation could not participate in either the World Conference or the 10th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament that preceded it, due to restrictive visa conditions imposed by the authorities of the United States of America.

I reiterate the IPU's firm belief in the value of open and unrestricted dialogue between parliamentarians from different political, economic and social systems as a means of promoting understanding and resolving differences and cannot agree with the use, by any country, of political visa sanctions aimed at members of parliament duly designated by their parliaments to attend IPU meetings.

The IPU reaffirms its commitment to the principle and policy of holding its statutory meetings only in those countries where all IPU Members and Observers are invited, and where their representatives are certain to be granted the entry visas required for participation.

I take this opportunity to welcome the significant progress that has been made in the cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations. Nonetheless, I am sure all Members will agree much more remains to be done. The IPU looks forward to the conclusion of a new Cooperation Agreement that would place the institutional relationship on a stronger footing and further enhance the strategic partnership between the two organizations. As welcomed by the United Nations General Assembly, the IPU is providing a parliamentary component to major United Nations processes.

As such, joint events such as the World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and the annual Parliamentary Hearings at the United Nations should be formally recognized as official United Nations meetings, for which all members of parliament duly designated by the parliaments of the United Nations Member States are entitled to receive visas, in accordance with UN-Host Country Agreements."

The Governing Council took note of the Presidential statement.

(b) On the activities of the Executive Committee

The President said that most of the subjects discussed by the Executive Committee during its two days of deliberations at the current Assembly would be reported on under other items of the agenda.

Item 5 of the agenda

INTERIM REPORT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE IPU SINCE THE 196th SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

(a) Oral report of the Secretary General

The Secretary General said that 2014 had been a significant year for the IPU, with a change of both President and Secretary General. The new President and Secretary General had been working in tandem to deliver the Organization's mandate. Considerable efforts had been made to open the IPU to its various constituencies and partners, including the local community in Geneva and the Swiss Federal Parliament in Bern. Efforts had also been made to encourage the diplomatic community to work directly with parliaments.

Both he and the President had been working on reaching out to young people. The IPU had a vibrant youth programme, which continued to be a priority. Steps had also been taken to reach out to the academic community: an agreement had been reached with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies which was providing support to the IPU. Further engagement in that regard would be encouraged. The President and the Secretary General had been reaching out to non-Member parliaments in the Pacific and Caribbean regions, to encourage them to join the Organization. Some progress had been made; support had been garnered from the parliaments of Australia and New Zealand to mobilize engagement in the Pacific, and from Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean. Efforts to engage with the United States Congress were still ongoing.

Regarding issues of global concern, steps were being taken to breathe more life into the Middle East Committee, with a view to expanding its mandate to tackle issues related to the Middle East other than the Arab-Israeli conflict. Particular consideration was also being given to the role of the IPU in the Syrian Arab Republic. Further efforts were required in that regard, to increase not just the Organization's visibility but also its credibility. A dossier on

combating terrorism was being compiled to ensure that parliamentarians were continuously involved in anti-terrorism efforts. Representatives of the United Nations would attend the IPU Assembly to discuss IPU-United Nations coordinated efforts, and explain their expectations for cooperation with the global parliamentary community to combat terrorism and extremism, and promote peace and international security. The IPU's engagement with the United Nations was not subservience, but rather an effort to work together on the implementation of the organizations' respective mandates, and to strengthen the role of parliamentarians in ensuring democratic oversight of international decision-making.

Lastly, with regard to the resources available to the Organization, he said that the IPU was operating in a difficult global economic environment, in which countries were constrained financially and economically. Efforts to mobilize resources were ongoing, and voluntary contributions had been successfully increased.

The Governing Council took note of the oral report of the Secretary General.

(b) International Day for Democracy
(CL/197/5(b)-R.1)

The Secretary General, drawing attention to the report before the Council, contained in document CL/197/5(b)-R.1, said that concerted efforts had been made to encourage parliaments to commemorate the International Day of Democracy each year. In 2015, some 20 parliaments had held events and the IPU had organized commemorative activities with the United Nations. The Geneva local authorities had organized a celebration, and the IPU had hosted a group of students, together with senior government and legislative officials from the canton of Geneva. The IPU continued to use social media to promote messages of democracy.

The Governing Council took note of the report on the International Day of Democracy.

Item 6 of the Agenda

FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE IPU
(CL/197/6-R.1)

The Secretary General, presenting the report on the financial situation of the IPU at 31 July 2015 contained in document CL/197/6-R.1, said that the financial situation of the Organization was stable, with funds coming in steadily. A total of 90 per cent of assessed contributions had been received from Member Parliaments. The situation of outstanding contributions could be seen in Annex II to the report. Since the report had been published, Chad had paid its outstanding contribution. As a result, arrears now stood at a total of CHF 1 million.

With regard to spending, the Organization was on target. Most activities were within budget, and in some cases savings had been made. The Working Capital Fund currently stood at CHF 9 million. Regarding capital expenditure, some computer hardware had been purchased. The performance of the Legacy Staff Pension Fund was currently below target owing to the general financial and economic climate. A full report on the implementation of the 2015 budget would be given to the Governing Council at its next session in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2016.

The Governing Council took note of the report on the financial situation of the IPU at 31 July 2015.

Item 7 of the agenda

DRAFT PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR 2016
(CL/197/7-P.1)

The Secretary General introduced the draft programme and budget for 2016, as contained in document CL/197/7-P.1, which he said had been compiled in a consultative process with the governing bodies' guidance, as transmitted through the Sub-Committee on Finance. Every effort had been made to maintain the Organization's level of activity,

particularly given its increased responsibilities under the new post-2015 development agenda, while keeping assessed contributions as low as possible in response to the increasing financial pressure on Member Parliaments. An 8.7 per cent reduction in assessed contributions had therefore been agreed with the governing bodies. That reduction had been achieved through a combination of efforts including a tightening of the budget across programme activities and measures to increase revenue from other sources.

As a result of the decrease, assessed contributions would account for CHF 9.9 million of the total revenue of the organization for 2016, which, in real terms, meant a return to the levels of income from assessed contributions in the mid-1990s. The Executive Committee had discussed that reduction, and concerns had been expressed that the decrease should not inhibit the Organization's capacity to fulfil its mandate. The total revenue for 2016 would, however, still be higher than that for 2015, owing to an increase in extra-budgetary resources, which accounted for 27 per cent of the total budget and had already been secured or was in reasonable certainty of being secured.

Investment in gender-related activities accounted for 10 per cent of the Organization's overall budget; the bulk of funding was allocated to carrying out democracy-related activities. The budget document also requested that the Secretariat be given permission to draw on the Working Capital Fund to the tune of CHF 119,000 to balance the budget. Such action had been approved in the past, on the understanding that it was a temporary, one-off measure. There would be no cuts in the Organization's activities or in the meeting time for statutory assemblies and other bodies. Some costs from the core budget had been reallocated in order to avoid programme cuts, and a concerted effort was being made to reduce the costs of the IPU office in New York.

On communications, resources had been included in the budget to help build the visibility of the Organization, including financial support for the development of the IPU website. Specific commitments had been received from the Parliament of the United Arab Emirates for developing the website in Arabic, English, French and Spanish, which was particularly welcome. The Organization's work would also continue to be guided by the Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments, and a rights-based approach was being introduced into the work of the Secretariat.

The budget document listed the entities providing resources to the Organization to supplement the core budget. Efforts had also been made to reach out to other donors, and a positive response had been received: The Speaker of the Chinese Parliament had recently announced a supplementary contribution of US\$ 1.5 million to the IPU budget, earmarked for capacity building in developing countries. The 2016 budget had been prepared in the spirit of making the IPU "fit for purpose", in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The budget was results-based, and established objectives were in line with the strategic objectives of the Organization. It identified the activities to be carried out and provided indicators for monitoring the results achieved.

Mr. R.M.K. Al Shariqi (United Arab Emirates), speaking as the Chairperson of the Executive Committee Sub-committee on Finance, said that, having been involved in its initial preparation, the Sub-committee had considered the proposed 2016 budget carefully. The proposed budget guaranteed an 8.7 per cent decrease in assessed contributions, while maintaining the Organization's activities through the use of more voluntary contributions. While the Sub-committee appreciated the efforts made to reduce assessed contributions, it remained concerned that the IPU could lose its independence if it became too reliant on voluntary contributions.

Mr. P. Van Den Driessche (Belgium) welcomed the news that extra funding had been provided to update the IPU website and said that greater efforts were required to raise awareness of the Organization at country level.

The President said that efforts to enhance the visibility of the IPU would continue. The Executive Committee had recently discussed the need to digitalize the Organization's archives, with a view to bringing its past to life and making that information more widely available.

The Governing Council approved the 2016 draft consolidated budget, as contained in document CL/197/7-P.1.

Item 10 of the Agenda

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

(a) IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Tokyo
(CL/197/10(a)-R.1)

Mr. G. Monde (Zambia) delivered the report, as contained in document CL/197/10(a)-R.1, on the Conference, which had been jointly organized by the IPU and the Diet of Japan and had brought together 200 young men and women parliamentarians from some 66 countries. The next Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians would take place in Lusaka, Zambia.

(b) Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe
(CL/197/10(b)-R.1)

Mr. L. Borbely (Romania) delivered the report contained in document CL/197/10(b)-R.1, on the Seminar, which had taken place in Bucharest, Romania. Representatives of the United Nations Development Fund, United Nations Children's Fund and UNWOMEN had been present, and challenges including climate change and gender inequality had been discussed.

(c) 10th meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament
(CL/197/10(c)-R.1)

Ms. J. Luveni (Fiji) introduced the report on the 10th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament contained in document CL/197/10(c)-R.1 and said that the meeting had taken place at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The debate had focused on innovating for gender equality with a view to identifying key strategies and actions to step up progress. The discussions had aimed to feed into the deliberations and outcome of the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. Participants had agreed that gender equality was at the heart of democracy, peace and sustainable development, and was a matter of dignity, justice and good governance. Although progress had been made, no country could claim to have realized true equality between women and men. Participants had therefore agreed on five strategies to be pursued by parliaments: collective action, involving men in the fight for gender equality; investing in women's economic empowerment, in particular for rural women, women with disabilities, and women in poverty; challenging mindsets; legislating to end violence against women; and exercising parliamentary power to oversee government action and ensure adequate funding for gender equality.

(e) Regional seminar on Promoting child nutrition in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region
(CL/197/10(e)-R.1)

Ms. B. Jagger (Namibia) presented the report contained in document CL/197/10(e)-R.1, on the Seminar which had been jointly organized by the IPU and the United Nations Children's Fund, hosted by the Parliament of Namibia, and attended by 104 participants, including 40 parliamentarians from 9 countries in the SADC region. The seminar had taken place at the end of September, immediately after the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, during which the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals had been adopted. Participants had committed to join the general mobilization for the achievement of those Goals, in particular to tackle poverty and promote good health. The seminar had afforded an opportunity to discuss the impact of poor nutrition, in particular wasting, underweight and overweight, and the alarming potential impacts if urgent action was not taken. Attention was drawn to the link between food and nutrition security and economic development. Five recommendations, as detailed in the report, had been agreed for priority action.

(f) **34th session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO**
(CL/197/10(f)-R.1)

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden), presenting the report contained in document CL/197/10(f)-R.1, said that the Steering Committee was responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, which was a joint endeavour of the IPU and the European Parliament. During the session, representatives of the WTO had briefed the Committee on the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, preparations for the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference, and the state of ratifications of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement: although 30 more ratifications were expected by the end of 2015, progress remained slow. The Committee was convinced that at least part of the responsibility for that situation rested with parliaments. He drew attention to the statement issued by the Committee, which was annexed to the report. The Committee had agreed that the next plenary session of the WTO Parliamentary Conference would take place in 2016 at the WTO in Geneva.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

The Secretary General announced that the quorum for the 197th session of the Governing Council was 91 delegates, given that 180 delegates were present at the first sitting of the Council.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.

Second sitting

Wednesday, 21 October 2015

The meeting was called to order at 9.40 a.m., with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr. S. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), in the Chair.

Item 11 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(b) **Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians**
(CL/197/11(b)-R.1 and R.2 and 11(b)-P.1 and P.2)

Ms. A. Clwyd (United Kingdom), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, reporting on the Committee's recent session in Geneva, said that the Committee had examined 49 cases concerning the situation of 115 members of parliament in 19 countries. Hearings had been held with 9 delegations and complainants. Those meetings were essential for the Committee's work, since they allowed the Committee to enhance its understanding of the cases before it, and to express its concerns and exchange views. While freedom of expression was a direct or indirect concern in most of the cases before the Committee, the most frequent abuses examined by the Committee at its last session were, in descending order: arbitrary detention or arrest; lack of fair trial; and murder. Although the cases under consideration were usually presented to the Governing Council in geographic order by region, beginning in Africa, she wished first to draw particular attention to two extremely serious cases in Iraq.

IRAQ

In the course of his parliamentary work, Mr. Mohammed Al-Dainy had documented and publicly denounced the use of torture by the security forces in secret places of detention. As a consequence, extremely grave accusations had been made against him and he had been sentenced to death in January 2010. The Committee's belief that those accusations had been false and fabricated had been confirmed in 2012. Although an agreement for a retrial had

been reached, Iraqi law had required Mr. Al-Dainy, who had sought refuge abroad, to return to Iraq. In recent months, Mr. Al-Dainy had voluntarily returned to Iraq and surrendered himself for a retrial. While the Committee had been pleased that the retrial had taken place and Mr. Al-Dainy had been proven innocent, it had been shocked to learn that although he remained in detention despite his acquittal. The Committee called on the member parliaments of the IPU to urge the Iraqi authorities to expedite his release.

The Committee had also examined the case of Mr. Ahmed Al-Alwani, who had been convicted of terrorism offences and sentenced to death. The Committee had been appalled by the sentence handed down to Mr. Al-Alwani, given the serious doubts over the fairness of his trial, and was deeply concerned by allegations that he had been tortured, was being held in solitary confinement, and was being denied medical treatment despite being in very poor health. The Committee urged the Iraqi authorities to lift Mr. Al-Alwani's death sentence and to expedite appeal proceedings, which should be conducted in a manner that respected Mr. Alwani's right to a fair trial. The allegations of torture and ill-treatment should be investigated without delay, and Mr. Alwani provided with urgent medical care.

Despite the Committee's efforts to foster dialogue, it regretted that the Council of Representatives of Iraq had not responded to requests for information. The Committee hoped that cooperation would resume shortly. Given the seriousness of the concerns, the Committee had called for a mission to be undertaken to Iraq to obtain first-hand information on the current situation of those parliamentarians.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the cases of Mr. Mohamed Al-Dainy and Mr. Ahmed Al-Alwani.

AFRICA

CAMEROON

Mr. Dieudonné Ambassa Zang had left Cameroon in 2009 and been granted refugee status abroad. In June 2015, he had been sentenced to life imprisonment on accusations of misappropriating public funds during his tenure as Minister of Public Works. The Committee was deeply concerned not only about the severity of the penalty but also about the proceedings: there were so many irregularities that the verdict, which had shown no evidence of personal enrichment, was untenable. The accusations against Mr. Zang, which he had extensively refuted, should at most qualify as poor management. The matter was currently before the Supreme Court and the Committee sincerely hoped that the right decision would be taken. The Committee would follow the proceedings closely and, if possible, send an observer.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the case of Mr. Dieudonné Ambassa Zang.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Mr. Jean-Bertrand Ewanga had been convicted in 2014, simply for exercising his right to freedom of expression, which the Committee underscored was not only an essential right in and of itself, but also necessary to ensure that members of parliament could actively carry out their functions as representatives of their constituents. The Committee deplored that no steps had been taken to reach a satisfactory resolution of the case and that Mr. Ewanga had served the whole of his sentence. The Committee proposed that the case be closed, but noted with concern that it was not the first case of its kind and urged the Parliament to take immediate action to protect the freedom of expression of its members.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the case of Mr. Jean-Bertrand Ewanga.

ERITREA

The case of Eritrea remained one of the most serious cases before the Committee: for 11 members of the Eritrean Parliament, and their families, the nightmare had begun some 14 years previously, when they had been violently taken from their homes and detained incommunicado for having published an open letter calling for democratic reform and asking

the President of Eritrea to convene Parliament. The Committee remained appalled by the persistent silence of the authorities of Eritrea and their continued contempt for the most basic human rights of the 11 parliamentarians, most of whom were feared to be dead. The continued uncertainty about their fate had left their families in agony. The global parliamentary community must take action to exert pressure on the Eritrean authorities for the release of the 11 individuals concerned.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the case of the 11 parliamentarians.

NIGER

The Committee had before it the case of the former President of the National Assembly of Niger, Mr. Amadou Hama, who had been deprived of his parliamentary immunity and arrested on serious criminal charges. The judicial proceedings were ongoing, and the Committee expected due process guarantees to be fully respected. The observer mandated by the Committee had concluded that the proceedings appeared to have been conducted properly thus far. The Committee planned to continue monitoring proceedings when the trial on the merits began.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the case of Mr. Amadou Hama.

AMERICAS

COLOMBIA

The Committee had examined a series of cases in Colombia, including assassinations, decades previously of members of parliament in which justice had yet to be rendered, death threats against current members of parliament and the unlawful loss of parliamentary mandates. In recent years, an additional concern had been added to that list: fair trial in criminal cases against several members of parliament. Members of parliament were not above the law and should be held to account whenever they committed crimes. However, when faced with criminal proceedings, members of parliament should be guaranteed a fair trial. The absence of a fair trial had given the Committee particular cause for concern in the case of former Colombian senator Mr. Álvaro Araújo Castro. The Committee had strongly advocated for his case to be heard by the Inter-American human rights system so that he could finally obtain redress and be able to clear his name.

Mr. A. Araújo Castro (Colombia) said that, having been a member of the Colombian Parliament for 16 years, he had been convicted of a crime he had not committed. His case had been taken to the Supreme Court, which had absolved known criminals, and yet had punished him for a crime he had not committed. He had spent eight lonely years in prison, desperate and persecuted, in extremely harsh conditions, under arbitrary detention. The only support he had received during that time, and for which he was especially grateful, had come from the IPU and the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. He hoped that the IPU would continue to stand by him in his fight for justice, to exert pressure on the Colombian authorities to allow the case to be brought before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and to bring an end to the arbitrary treatment of parliamentarians in Colombia.

The President gave his assurances that the IPU would continue to stand by Mr. Araújo and his fellow parliamentarians, to fight for justice, fair trial guarantees and the human rights of parliamentarians.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the case of Mr. Álvaro Araújo Castro.

VENEZUELA

The Committee had before it the cases of a number of opposition members in Venezuela, at the heart of which were concerns about the protection of parliamentary immunity against undue legal reprisals, as well as the protection of the parliamentary

mandate. The Committee was particularly concerned about the apparent pattern of legal harassment against Ms. Maria Corina Machado. The Committee considered that the stripping of her parliamentary mandate in 2014 had been unlawful and without respect for due process, and that the recent decision to prevent her from standing in the forthcoming parliamentary elections appeared to be flawed and frivolous. The Committee had repeatedly offered to visit Venezuela to discuss the various concerns in the cases at hand but regretted that the authorities had yet to agree to receive a Committee delegation.

Mr. C. Zerpa (Venezuela) said that his delegation disagreed with the way in which the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians had classified the situation of Ms. Machado, a former member of parliament who had been very hostile to the legal system and had conspired against democracy. Her activities had been unconstitutional and against the law. The Committee's treatment of the case was therefore not entirely fair.

The President said that he hoped the Venezuelan authorities could agree to receive a Committee delegation, since a visit would enable the Committee to obtain a clear view of the facts of the case.

Mr. C. Zerpa (Venezuela) said it was important that both sides of the situation should be taken fully into account. He would pass the Committee's request for a visit to the parliamentary authorities in Venezuela, in order for the Committee to obtain the full picture of the situation.

The President said he was heartened by that assurance.

Ms. Y. Ferrer Gómez (Cuba) said that despite the various allegations against Venezuela, the Government had acted in accordance with the law.

The Governing Council endorsed the Committee decision relating to the case of the 14 parliamentarians.

ASIA

BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh, Mr. Shah Ams Kibria had been killed in a grenade attack in 2005, and the perpetrators had still not been held to account. While the Committee had been interested to note that judicial proceedings were finally under way, it remained deeply concerned that more than 10 years after the attack, not of the perpetrators had yet been held responsible before a court of law. A second case in Bangladesh concerned the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, who had been the victim of an attempted assassination in 2004, when she had been a member of the opposition. The Committee noted that there had been a minor advancement in the trial, but remained deeply concerned at the slow pace of the proceedings. The Committee hoped that both trials would proceed swiftly and urged the authorities to pursue all necessary efforts to apprehend the suspects still at large. In order to be kept better informed of new developments in both cases, the Committee had decided to send a trial observer to monitor the proceedings.

Mr. F. Rabbi (Bangladesh) said that with regard to the grenade attack against Mr. Kibria the trial was ongoing and positive developments had been made. He wished to assure the Governing Council that measures were being taken to ensure that the Sheikh Hasina trial would be completed as soon as possible. The Government was doing its utmost to expedite the proceedings. There would be no objection to the participation of a trial observer.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the cases of Mr. Shah Ams Kibria and Sheikh Hasina.

MALAYSIA

The Committee wished to present two cases in Malaysia: the first was the long-standing case of the former leader of the opposition, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, who had been sentenced for a second time in February 2015 on charges of sodomy. The Committee had always followed the trial proceedings against him very closely. The Governing Council had before it, in document CL/197/11(b)-R.2, the final report of the IPU trial observer as well as the official rebuttal of that report by the authorities and the trial observer's replies. The Committee believed that, in light of the many procedural irregularities and the serious concerns about the credibility of the evidence, Mr. Ibrahim should have been acquitted. The Committee hoped that the efforts to obtain a judicial review of his conviction and a pardon would be successful. The Committee called on the authorities to do everything possible to ensure that he received treatment from a doctor of his own choice, in connection with ongoing medical issues.

The second case was with respect to a number of parliamentarians facing investigations or charges under the Sedition Act, the Penal Code and the Peaceful Assembly Act, which directly affected their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. At the invitation of the Malaysian authorities a delegation had visited Malaysia in June 2015 to get a better understanding of the issues at state. Its report was contained in document CL/197/11(b)-R.1. The Committee regretted that a golden opportunity had been missed earlier in 2015, when instead of abolishing the Sedition Act, the authorities had decided to amend it. While some positive changes had been made – criticism of the Government was no longer criminalized – the Sedition Act remained vague and broad, and thus open to abuse. The Committee hoped that Parliament would initiate a fresh review of the Act with a view to bringing it into line with relevant international human rights standards. The Committee also hoped that the Attorney General would decide to discontinue the proceedings against the parliamentarians under the old Sedition Act, in connection with criticism of the Government and the judiciary.

Mr. Wee Ka Siong (Malaysia), expressing his delegation's reservations to the decision of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the Committee delegation had conducted a mission to Malaysia from 29 June to 1 July 2015, and had met with various authorities and heard a wide range of opinions with regard to the trial against former member of parliament Anwar Ibrahim, whose conviction for sodomy had been upheld by the Federal Court on 10 February 2015, as well as the sedition cases against other parliamentarians. The Malaysian delegation had explained that the case of Anwar Ibrahim had been through 68 postponements and 39 appeals since it had begun in 2008. Comprehensive due process had been followed throughout and the Government of Malaysia urged all parties to respect Malaysian judicial process and the judgement passed. The biased report by the IPU-appointed observer Mr. Mark Trowell and his subsequent book entitled *Sodomy 2* cast serious doubt over the abilities of the Malaysian judiciary.

Regarding the Sedition Act 1948, the arrests of the opposition members had not been intended to silence dissenting voices or suppress the opposition, but rather for contravention of the Sedition Act 1948. As pledged by the Prime Minister, the Sedition Act had been amended in April 2015. The amendments, however, could not be applied retrospectively. During the amendment process, a law professor from the Universiti Malaya had challenged the constitutionality of the Sedition Act before the Federal Court. That action had resulted in the sedition cases being postponed until the Federal Court had ruled on the constitutionality. According to Federal Constitution Article 145(3) pursuit of the eight sedition cases remained within the discretionary power of the Attorney General.

The President said that both at the 132nd IPU Assembly in Hanoi, and during the Secretary General's mission to Malaysia, assurances had been given that the Sedition Act would be repealed. He expressed his disappointment that despite those assurances, the Act had not been abolished. He requested clarification on the ongoing trials of the eight parliamentarians in the context of the amendments to the Sedition Act: should they not be tried under the Act as amended, rather than under the original Act? He urged the Malaysian authorities to allow Mr. Ibrahim to receive medical attention from a doctor of his choice.

Mr. Wee Ka Siong (Malaysia), with regard to the Sedition Act, said that since the offences concerned had been committed before the Act had been amended, they must be tried under the old Act. The amended Act could not be applied retroactively. The continuation of the trials was at the discretion of the Attorney General. He wished to clarify that while the Malaysian authorities had acknowledged the need to review the Sedition Act, no assurances had been given to the effect that the Act would be repealed. The Act remained in order to protect racial harmony in Malaysia. With regard to medical treatment for Mr. Ibrahim, the authorities awaited a formal request on the issue from the Committee.

The Governing Council endorsed the Committee decisions relating to the cases of Mr. Anwar Ibrahim and the 11 parliamentarians.

MONGOLIA

The Committee had recently completed a mission to Mongolia, which had helped deepen the Committee's understanding of the status of the investigation into the assassination of Mr. Zorig Sanjasuuren in 1998. Despite uninterrupted investigations since his death, no suspects had been identified or held accountable. The final mission report would be presented to the Governing Council at its next session, once it had been shared with all parties for their observations. The Committee noted with satisfaction the continued commitment of the Mongolian authorities to shed light on the assassination. Only tangible progress and transparency in the investigation could effectively demonstrate strong political will to solve the case. The Committee therefore urged the authorities to redouble their efforts in that regard, and to declassify the case and strike a more appropriate balance between confidentiality and transparency.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the case of Mr. Zorig Sanjaasuren.

SRI LANKA

Significant developments were taking place in Sri Lanka, with the recent election of a new President and a new parliament, who seemed keen to promote truth and justice in an effort to address the substantive human rights violations committed during the internal conflict that had ended in 2009. That renewed commitment could explain the sudden and important progress in the two cases of particular concern to the Committee: the murders of Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham and Mr. Nadarajah Raviraj. Several suspects were under arrest, including high-ranking members of the army and former paramilitary groups. It was critical that the current momentum should be sustained. The proposed parliamentary select committee tasked with monitoring the investigations into the assassinations of members of parliament could make a critical contribution to those efforts, and should therefore be set up and start work as soon as possible.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the case of the five parliamentarians.

EUROPE

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Ms. Galina Starovoitova, a prominent human rights activist, had been murdered in November 1998 in what had been considered by the courts to be a politically motivated crime. Although some assailants had been convicted and sentenced to prison terms, others, including the masterminds, had yet to be held to account. Recent progress had been in the form of the conviction of Mr. Mikhail Glushchenko as the presumed instigator of the assassination. It was hoped that his admissions would allow further progress to be made towards ensuring full accountability for all those involved. The Committee regretted the lack of response from the State Duma and hoped that constructive dialogue would resume quickly.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the case of Ms. Galina Starovoitova.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

PALESTINE/ISRAEL

The Committee had hoped to hold a dialogue with the Israeli parliamentary authorities during the 133rd IPU Assembly to gain a better understanding of the situation of Palestinian members of parliament in Israeli detention. Speaker Aziz Dweik had been sentenced in May 2014 to a 12-month prison term, but the Committee had received no official documentation to understand the grounds for the conviction. The Committee therefore feared that the legal action against Mr. Dweik may have been based solely on his political affiliation. Mr. Marwan Barghouti and Mr. Ahmad Sa'adat also continued to serve long prison terms. The Committee continued to call for the release of both men, whose trials had not met fair trial standards. The Committee was keen to visit them in prison and urged the Israeli authorities to accede to that request. The Committee remained concerned about the continued practice of administrative detention and its indefinite renewal. In light of long-standing concerns about such detention, the Committee hoped that one of its members could attend and report on the judicial reviews in one or more cases of administrative detention.

The President said that if due process guarantees were not in place, the administrative detention system could be abused. He hoped that the Committee's request for a prison visit would be entertained.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decisions relating to the cases of Mr. Marwan Barghouti, Mr. Ahmad Sa'adat, 16 parliamentarians, and Mr. Aziz Dweik.

Ms. A. Clwyd (United Kingdom), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the Committee was a unique source of protection and redress in cases in which members of parliament were killed, intimidated or jailed for their political views or differences. If parliamentarians could not do their job properly, safely and without fear, parliament could not do its job to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of society as a whole. Without fundamental human rights, such as freedom of thought and expression, the right to life, liberty, equality and the right to take part in government there could be no democracy. Solidarity was indispensable in the Committee's work, and could make a fundamental difference to the advancement of the cases under the Committee's consideration. The Committee therefore urged all parliamentarians to keep parliamentary solidarity in mind and to use their powers as members of parliament to help their colleagues in need.

Mr. P. Ruddock (Australia), supported by **Mr. J. Passarinho (Brazil)**, expressed his appreciation for the outstanding work done by the Committee, which was particularly important for strengthening democracy around the world. Individual parliaments should consider the Committee's reports, and engage with parliaments in the countries concerned on a bilateral basis, to encourage implementation of the Committee's decisions.

The President agreed that bilateral engagement would enable parliamentary solidarity to be fully realized. The Governing Council was required to elect one female titular member to the Committee. The candidature of Ms. F. Koofi (Afghanistan) had been received. He took it that the Governing Council wished to elect that candidate.

It was so decided.

(f) Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

The Secretary General introduced a handbook, published jointly with UNAIDS, entitled *Fast-tracking HIV treatment: Parliamentary action and policy options*. The handbook was the fruit of a longstanding collaboration between the two organizations, which had worked together for almost a decade to promote parliamentary leadership and evidence-informed parliamentary response to the challenges of the HIV epidemic. The handbook built on the valuable experience gleaned through that cooperation, putting it in the context of the latest scientific evidence. Thanks to the robust contribution of parliaments, tremendous progress had been made with regard to the HIV/AIDS response in many countries. Legislation had been strengthened, particularly with regard to the human rights of people living with

HIV/AIDS. Significant progress had been made to prevent new infections, reduce AIDS-related deaths and gradually scale up services. Domestic resource mobilization was on the rise, African countries having increased the resources allocated to addressing the HIV epidemic by 150 per cent in the past four years.

Despite the progress made, some people remained disproportionately affected by the epidemic: men who had sex with men, sex workers, injecting drugs users, and other vulnerable people, including women and girls. Many countries still relied on donor funds to finance HIV services at a time when donor funds were generally decreasing. Stigma and discrimination related to HIV continued to pose a significant barrier to services and undermined progress: only 41 per cent of adults and 32 per cent of children accessed HIV treatment globally. As law-makers, overseers of government action, and community leaders, parliamentarians were in a unique position to provide crucial leadership for a new vision for health that made treatment a reality for all. The handbook would serve as a reference tool in that endeavour, providing practical information on making treatment a reality.

Mr. M. Sidibé (Director, UNAIDS) said that over the years, parliamentarians had been at the frontline of changing policy and influencing the debate on HIV, particularly through legislative change to make access to health care a right for all. HIV treatment that had once cost US\$ 15 000 per person per year now cost US\$ 80. That change could not have happened without the support of parliamentarians, who had created an enabling environment through the adoption of policies and budgets that had changed the dynamics of the response to HIV. Countries all over the world were making progress in fighting the epidemic. The new global goal was to arrive at a point where 90 per cent of people knew their HIV status, since that was the key to seeking treatment and preventing new infections. Such progress was possible: in countries such as Rwanda, Namibia and South Africa, nearly 90 per cent of people living with HIV were now receiving treatment; such treatment coverage seemed impossible only a few years previously.

Partnership with the IPU was crucial to end AIDS by 2030. Major challenges still persisted: 20 million people were still waiting for treatment and their lives were hanging in the balance. UNAIDS considered parliamentarians as an example of integrity, who brought accountability, translated words into action and addressed inequities. They therefore had a key role in ensuring that the denial that fuelled AIDS would be addressed. Parliamentarians were true agents of change, who would bring the issue of social justice to the centre of the HIV response, and would ensure a people-centred approach to health care based on the principle of non-discrimination to ensure that no-one was left behind. Particular efforts were required to expand access to HIV treatment, and to challenge the producers of medicines to reduce the financial burden on States. Life-saving medicines must be made available to all those who needed them, without exception.

Ms. S. Santos (Brazil) said that Brazil was committed to ending the epidemic and welcomed the new handbook.

The President said that the new handbook was the result of a good deal of hard work. He hoped it would be used effectively to guide parliamentarians in taking real action on the ground in terms of policy and ensuring that there was no discrimination and that the correct resources were allocated to HIV treatment and prevention.

(a) Meeting of Women Parliamentarians
(CL/197/11(a)-R.1)

Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia), President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, presenting the report contained in document CL/197/11(a)-R.1, said that the twenty-second Meeting of Women Parliamentarians had been well attended, with rich and informative debates, and panels that had been more gender-balanced than ever before. She drew attention to the section of the report describing the Meeting's first ever parity debate, which had been organized with a view to engaging women and men parliamentarians on issues of common interest. Participating delegations had been encouraged to be gender balanced, and she was pleased to note that many male participants had attended. The debate had addressed parliamentary oversight and political will, in a frank and diverse discussion. Much remained to be done to ensure that women and men parliamentarians controlled government action on an equal basis. Gender equality in oversight could only be achieved through equal representation in parliament.

The session had also included discussions on the gender dimension of migration. While migration presented an opportunity for many, it also presented particular risks for women. Refugee and migrant protection policies were required to prevent trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, discrimination and abuse. A discussion on democracy in the digital era had concluded that the Internet empowered women and should be accessible to women. Amendments had been submitted to the draft resolution of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, all of which had been accepted. 2015 marked the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. More must be done to live up to the commitments undertaken in that resolution. Women's participation must be increased in parliament, in peace building and in defence, and accountability mechanisms with regard to the implementation of resolution 1325 must be promoted. She thanked the outgoing members of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians.

(c) Committee on Middle East Questions
(CL/197/11(c)-R.1 and 11(c)-P.1–P.4)

Lord Judd (United Kingdom), President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, presenting the report of the Committee, as contained in document CL/197/11(c)-R.1, said that the Committee had deeply regretted the postponement of its mission to Israel and Palestine, which it had decided should go ahead in the second half of November 2015, hopefully with the full participation of all Committee members. It had also expressed the wish to continue to be involved in IPU efforts with regard to the Syrian crisis. The planned mission to Syria must be transparent and impartial. Since the only way to foster understanding was to discuss objective issues of mutual interest, rather than for each party to simply recite its own frustrations, a roundtable discussion on water security had been planned. The Committee had, however, questioned whether it was useful to pursue the discussion without all members present: despite assurances given to the Secretary General, the Israeli delegation had not attended. Although the Palestinian representatives, and indeed the Committee as a whole, had been keen for the Israeli delegation to participate, a decision had been taken to proceed, since the issue of water security was relevant to the region as a whole.

The refugee crisis had also been discussed, and members had shared the legal, political and social challenges associated with their experiences of migration. Lastly, the issue of terrorism in the Middle East had been considered. People were impressionable in their frustrations, and steps must be taken to win them to the cause of freedom and democracy, rather than driving them into the hands of extremists. Politicians must not to play games and court emotional, reactionary public opinion. Destroying the essential instruments of democracy and freedom would not achieve security.

The Committee had elected Ms. D. Pascal Allende (Chile) as its new President. She was an active member of the Committee, who represented a family of great distinction and courage in the struggle for freedom and democracy. As outgoing President he thanked all those who had contributed to the Committee's work, within the IPU as well as in Gaza, Israel and Jordan. The Committee was not making a stand for Palestinians because they were Palestinians, nor was it making a stand for Israelis because they were Israeli; it was making a stand for them because they were people. People everywhere should be able to live in security and enjoy their rights and freedoms. The IPU should continue to stand for those principles wherever challenges arose and must not move into a world of resolutions and rhetoric.

The President thanked Lord Judd for the commitment, passion and sincerity he had brought to the Committee on Middle East Questions, and said that his advice and insight would continue to be very valuable to the Committee as it moved forward in its work. The Governing Council was required to elect three titular members and one substitute member of the Committee. Candidatures had been received from Ms. N. Motsamai (Lesotho) and Ms. C. Vienne (Belgium) and Mr. N. Shai (Israel) for the titular posts, and Mr. R. Nordqvist (Denmark) as a substitute member. He took it that the Council wished to elect those candidates.

It was so decided.

(d) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
(CL/197/11(d)-R.1 and CL/197/11(d)-P.1 and P.2)

Ms. N. Ali Assegaf (Indonesia) presented the report contained in document CL/197/11(d)-R.1 and drew attention to three main priority areas that the Committee had identified, on which to focus its work: raising awareness and giving visibility to international humanitarian law; monitoring implementation of international humanitarian law and refugee protection conventions; and holding governments accountable. The Committee agreed that it needed to conduct missions to gather first-hand information, hold hearings with delegations, produce reports and develop tools to assist parliaments in taking action, as well as work closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Committee had identified the need to conduct a mission to Syria to investigate the refugee situation and to consider other issues of concern, such as enforced disappearance and internal displacement. A decision had been taken to amend the Committee's rules to clarify that the quorum required for decision-making corresponded to half of the Committee's sitting members. Lastly, she drew attention to the summary of the Committee's discussion on the humanitarian dimension of forced migration, and in particular the four priorities identified, which was annexed to the written report.

The President informed the Governing Council that it was required to elect two Committee members from the Twelve Plus Group (one male and one female), and one member (male) from the Eurasia Group. Candidatures had been received from Ms. M. Green (Sweden) and Mr. P. Mahoux (Belgium). No candidatures had been received from the Eurasia Group. He took it that the Council wished to elect the two candidates from the Twelve Plus Group.

It was so decided.

(e) Gender Partnership Group
(CL/197/11(e)-R.1)

Mr. R.M.K. Al Shariqi (United Arab Emirates) presented the report of the Gender Partnership Group, contained in document CL/197/11(e)-R.1, and drew particular attention to the fact that 32.5 per cent of delegates attending the 133rd IPU Assembly were women, and of the 122 delegations comprising at least two delegates, 13 were composed exclusively of men. The Group had reviewed the Statutes and Rules of the IPU to ensure that they enshrined a consistent standard of gender equality. It had recommended that the minimum requirement for women's membership of the Executive Committee should be increased from 20 per cent to 30 per cent. In its examination of women's participation in parliament, it had noted that seven parliaments did not have any women members, four of which were in Pacific island States, two were in the Arab region, and one was in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The Committee would to its utmost to ensure that gender parity would be achieved.

The President added that the contribution of women parliamentarians was not simply a question of quantity, but it was also necessary to empower women by giving them the tools and the resources to make a real difference in advancing gender equality.

(g) Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
(CL/197/11(g)-R.1)

Mr. Al Tenaiji (United Arab Emirates) introduced the report of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU, as contained in document CL/197/11(g)-R.1, and said that compared with previous assemblies, the average age of participants in the forum had increased, and the number of participants had stagnated. Women had been underrepresented. Consideration should therefore be given to how to attract younger parliamentarians to participate in future assemblies. The Forum had discussed migration, underscoring the specific needs of young people and adolescents who were the main victims in the current refugee crisis: they were far from their families and at risk of discrimination and xenophobia, with women and girls at particular risk of trafficking, violence and exploitation. The root causes of migration must be tackled: war, violence, unemployment, discrimination, marginalization caused people to leave their homes to seek a better life elsewhere. Those

issues should be at the heart of parliamentary discussions at the national and global levels. The Forum had also discussed the urgent need to stop the sale of weapons to terrorist groups. Lastly, he commended Ms. Marija Lugarić (Croatia), who had been elected to parliament at the age of 20 and who, after a 16-year parliamentary career, had decided not to stand for re-election, for her contribution to and leadership of the youth movement in the IPU.

(h) Group of Facilitators for Cyprus
(CL/197/11(h)-P.1)

The President informed the Governing Council that it would be required to elect one facilitator for Cyprus. It had before it the candidature of Mr. P. Van Den Driessche (Belgium). He took it that the Council wished to elect Mr. P. Van Den Driessche.

It was so decided.

Item 10 of the agenda
(continued)

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

(d) Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament
(CL/197/10(d)-R.1)

The President, introducing the report on the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, as contained in document CL/197/10(d)-R.1, said that the Conference had been convened every five years since 2000. At that time, the main challenges had been bridging the gap between democracy and international relations, the legislature and the executive, and enabling people to have greater control of the international agenda through their elected representatives. Those challenges still remained, and with a view to seeking solutions, the Conference had focused on the theme Placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development: Building the world the people want.

The newly adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development constituted the most ambitious global agenda yet, with people-centred Sustainable Development Goals for all countries and a promise to leave no-one behind. Governance, which in the Millennium Declaration had been merely an aspiration, had become a goal for all: Sustainable Development Goal 16 called for accountable, transparent and effective institutions, and was the key to achieving all of the other Goals. The IPU would focus on promoting good governance, for which parliaments must be fit for purpose. The Hanoi Declaration, adopted by the 132nd IPU Assembly, focused on the importance of translating words into action. Efforts would be made to prepare a self-evaluation kit for parliaments, for presentation at the 134th IPU in Lusaka, to assess how apt they were to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals. The Goals should be viewed in the context of the deepening relationship between the IPU and the United Nations. A new cooperation agreement was currently under negotiation, which would take account of the new, expanded role that the IPU played in global affairs.

Regarding specific actions in follow-up to the fourth World Conference, parliaments could adopt resolutions on the Sustainable Development Goals and on parliament's role in attaining them. A sample resolution had been produced, which could be used as a model and adapted to the particular circumstances of each national parliament. There would be considerable demands on parliaments to implement the Agenda for Sustainable Development. The IPU stood ready to promote all three prongs of the agenda – peace, development and democracy, through an integrated approach taking into consideration not only the Sustainable Development Goals, but also the outcome of the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Declaration on disaster risk reduction.

Parliamentary capacity must be enhanced as a matter of priority, from two angles: institutional capacity as a whole, and the capacity of individual parliamentarians. The handbooks compiled by the IPU were part of that effort. It was a matter of action, rather than rhetoric, if parliaments were to fulfil their role in saving lives, protecting livelihoods and enriching the existence of all people.

Item 8 of the agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IPU STRATEGY 2012-2017

The Secretary General said that a roadmap was in place for the revision of the IPU Strategy, and a full report would be drafted at the end of the year for presentation to the Governing Council at its next session in Lusaka, Zambia in 2016. Progress reports had been compiled for strategic objectives 1, 2, 3 and 5.

(a) Strategic Objective 1: Strengthen democracy through parliaments
(CL/197/8(a)-P.1)

Under Strategic Objective 1, efforts had focused on developing IPU standards for democracy and democratic parliaments, and on encouraging youth participation in democracy and political institutions. Considerable progress had been made towards preparing the Second Global Parliamentary Report, which was due for publication at the end of 2016, and would be on the subject of parliamentary oversight and accountability. A survey was being conducted, to ensure that the Report was informed by the opinions of parliamentarians. All those present were encouraged to participate in the survey, to shed light on how oversight was exercised, what capacity parliaments had for accountability, and what challenges they faced, so that the IPU could assist.

The Common Principles for Support to Parliament had been launched at the 132nd IPU Assembly in Hanoi. Close to 100 endorsements had been received from parliaments and related partners. The IPU was continuing its campaign to ensure that the principles became a universal reality, and an agreement had been reached with the United Nations Development Programme to reach out more to United Nations agencies with regard to their capacity building in States.

Efforts were being made to promote the youth agenda, and in that regard the IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Tokyo had been the first event where members of parliament, school children and members of the public had come together to discuss issues of common interest.

(b) Strategic Objective 2: Advance gender equality
(CL/197/8(b)-P.1)

2015 had been a year of global milestones in gender: the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action, the 30th anniversary of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, and the 10th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament. Those events had afforded an opportunity to review efforts to promote gender equality and women's rights. The IPU had continued to produce monthly statistics on women's participation in political institutions. The IPU had aggressively pursued its work with regard to inclusiveness and was striving to enhance the capacity and contribution of women in parliament, not just the quantity of women parliamentarians. Work was being done with the new Tunisian Parliament, for example, to see how team spirit could be fostered among women parliamentarians. In Kenya, the IPU was providing technical assistance to ensure that no more than two thirds of members of Parliament were of one gender.

Another major aspect of the IPU's work on gender equality was the advancement of women's rights, helping parliaments to devise and enforce legislation on violence against women. The IPU had been working with the Parliament of Mali to take leadership in combating violence against women, and had also been involved in encouraging parliaments to contribute to the work of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. A memorandum of understanding had been concluded with the Parliament of Bangladesh on efforts to address the phenomenon of early marriage. It was hoped that the Bangladesh example would serve as a model for other parliaments in the region.

(c) Strategic Objective 3: Protect and promote human rights
(CL/197/8(c)-P.1)

The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians had been very active on the ground, conducting numerous missions in order to take its work to the countries concerned. It was not the Committee's objective to embarrass the authorities in any country, but rather to engage in a dialogue with them in order to find mutually satisfactory solutions to each human rights case. All parliaments were encouraged to cooperate with the Committee, which was the only international body that worked to specifically promote and protect the rights of parliamentarians.

Efforts were being made to ensure that parliaments remained on the radar of the United Nations Human Rights Council, particularly in its Universal Periodic Review process. A handbook on migration, human rights and governance had been launched, which would provide useful guidance on the human rights aspects of migration. With regard to children's rights, a particular focus had been placed on nutritional aspects, and the Parliament of Namibia had hosted an important regional meeting on child nutrition. Efforts must be made to follow up to the recommendations emanating from that meeting. The IPU was making an effort to adopt a rights-based approach to all of its work, and an assessment had been conducted in that regard. Training was being given to all staff, to ensure that the Secretariat was human rights sensitive. The rights-based approach would then be rolled out across the whole organization, with a view to ensuring that human rights were placed at the heart of all parliamentary activities.

(d) Strategic Objective 5: Build parliamentary support for international development goals
Contribution to the post-2015 development agenda
(CL/197/8(d)-P.1 and Inf.1)

Development partners frequently called for parliamentary action without ensuring that parliaments had the necessary capacity and resources to answer that call. It was the responsibility of development partners to ensure that parliaments were fit for purpose. Country teams should therefore be encouraged to work more closely with parliaments to ensure that development outcomes and policies adopted by parliaments, and the resources made available by parliaments were consistent with the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Secretary General expressed particular gratitude to the Parliament of Romania, which had hosted a major conference in Bucharest to consider how parliaments could begin to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda into their work.

A lot of unfinished business remained from the Millennium Development Goals, and in that regard he drew attention to the successful joint work being done by the IPU and the World Health Organization on maternal, newborn and child health. In that regard, particular efforts were being made by the parliaments of Lesotho, Rwanda and Uganda to promote women's, children's and adolescent health. IPU had been involved in the drafting of the second Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, and had made clear its interest in participating in the accountability mechanism, which would be put in place to ensure that the commitments undertaken through the Strategy were upheld. Lastly, he hoped that the Handbook on fast-tracking HIV treatment would support action at the country level.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden) emphasized the importance of beginning work to renew the IPU strategy almost immediately, since its revision would be time consuming, and all Member Parliaments should have the possibility to be involved.

The Secretary General expressed the Secretariat's commitment to work diligently to update the strategy. A mid-term review had been conducted, which had garnered useful feedback. Options for the amendment of the Strategy would be presented to the Governing Council at its next session, for an inclusive discussion. Member Parliaments' feedback would be taken into account and all efforts would be made to ensure that the new strategy was in tune with all developments.

The President added that consideration should be given to how member Parliaments interacted with the IPU. Lines of communication between the Secretariat and Member Parliaments were open at all times, not only during statutory assemblies. Members should not wait to be approached for their views, but rather should engage with the Secretariat at all times. Consideration must be given to how to revise the existing Strategy.

Item 9 of the agenda

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
(CL/197/9-P.1)

The Secretary General, introducing the report on cooperation with the United Nations System contained in document CL/197/9-P.1, said that the report was essentially a list of the joint activities in which the IPU had participated with various United Nations bodies. The United Nations Secretary-General had participated in the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, along with the President of the General Assembly, to show their support for the work of the IPU. Representatives of UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme had also been present, both of which were bodies that would have a particularly important role to play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The IPU was giving particular attention to the work of parliaments to contribute to the global effort to combat terrorism. Over recent months several activities had been undertaken in that regard, and he had been privileged to address the United Nations Security Council 1540 Committee on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee. While there was no paucity in pronouncements from parliaments on their role in combating terrorism, it was time to move from words to action. The IPU would provide guidance for parliaments on their role in combating violent extremism and terrorism.

Regarding the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the IPU, the draft had been approved at the 132nd IPU Assembly in Hanoi, and the Secretary General had submitted it to the United Nations Secretary-General for consideration. When a response had been received it would be transmitted to the Governing Council. Members of the IPU had stressed the importance of concluding the agreement while the current United Nations Secretary-General was in office.

Mr. N. Singh (India) expressed concern that the IPU agenda should be shaped by parliamentarians, as the representatives of the people, not by a handful of officials from the United Nations.

The President reassured the Council that during an interactive dialogue, United Nations representatives would present the UN perspective but it was for parliamentarians to debate the issues and come up with recommendations on how to move forward.

Mr. M. Alhassan Alamin (Sudan) said that there did not appear to be a link between the IPU's activities with the United Nations and the work of the IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs. He hoped that the bureau of the Standing Committee could be more involved in joint activities with the United Nations.

Item 12 of the agenda

134th IPU ASSEMBLY

The President said that preparations for the 134th IPU Assembly, to be held in Lusaka, Zambia from 19 to 23 March 2016 were well under way. The theme chosen for the Assembly would be *Rejuvenating democracy, giving voice to youth*. Democracy was the crucial link between people's aspirations and real development on the ground.

Mr. N. Evans (United Kingdom) requested that space be allocated in the plenary hall for young people, who might wish to listen to the discussions and engage with parliaments during the plenary meetings of the Assembly.

The President agreed that facilitating the participation of young people would be a positive step, and added that good use would be made of electronic media to promote the work of the Assembly.

Item 13 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS

(CL/197/13-P.1)

(a) Statutory meetings

(b) Specialized meetings and other events

The Secretary General introduced document CL/197/13-P.1, which contained a list of the future statutory, specialized and other meetings of the IPU. Most of the additional meetings being planned would not have any cost implications for the IPU, since they were either being funded by partners or through extra-budgetary funding. All of the meetings were consistent with the IPU Strategy. He drew particular attention to a meeting being planned in Algiers, in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Security Council, to engage national parliaments in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540. Several members of the United Nations Security Council had expressed an interest in participating in that seminar. Owing to the busy schedule for the latter part of 2015, including the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, the United Nations Summit and other meetings, the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations would take place in New York in February 2016. In order to expedite efforts to implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, two meetings on follow-up to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals were in the pipeline for 2016. The Parliament of Romania had offered to host one of those meetings.

The President underscored the importance of regional initiatives and events led by Member Parliaments, since the IPU could not deliver on all Members' expectations from Geneva alone. Decentralization of activities was actively encouraged.

With regard to statutory meetings, the 134th Assembly was due to take place in Lusaka, Zambia. Traditionally, the second Assembly each year was held in Geneva. Since no other offers had been received for 2016, the 135th Assembly would take place in Geneva from 22 to 26 October 2016. If in the future offers were received from Member Parliaments to host both annual Assemblies outside Geneva, without any financial implications for the Organization, those offers could be considered.

The parliaments of Israel, the Russian Federation and Bangladesh had expressed an interest in hosting IPU Assemblies in 2017. The Executive Committee had considered those offers. While the Israeli authorities had stated that visa issuance would not pose any problems, some countries had an in principle position not to attend events held in Israel. The offer from Israel would therefore be reconsidered in future if the situation changed. Turning to the offer from the Russian Federation, the Executive Committee had expressed concern that certain countries and individuals were on a "blacklist" and not permitted to enter the Russian Federation. Verbal assurances had been received from the Russian Parliament that there would be no restrictions on attendance. Formal confirmation of those assurances would be sought, and the proposal would be discussed further at the 134th Assembly in Lusaka. Lastly, the Executive Committee had been unanimous in its recommendation to proceed with the proposal from Bangladesh. A team from the IPU Secretariat would conduct a country visit to establish whether the necessary logistics were in place to hold an Assembly. On the basis of the findings of the visit, the Executive Committee would make a recommendation to the Governing Council in Lusaka that the 136th Assembly in March 2017 should be held in Bangladesh.

Mr. I. Liddell-Grainger (United Kingdom) asked whether the Russian Federation travel restrictions on certain individually named parliamentarians would be lifted immediately.

Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation) recalled that the "blacklist" was a response to the European Union "blacklist", which restricted travel for Russian individuals, including some parliamentarians. As such, the Russian Federation "blacklist" would be cancelled in response

to a cancellation of the European Union “blacklist”. With regard to a possible IPU Assembly to be held in the Russian Federation, he would seek an official response to the request to lift travel restrictions, and expressed his certainty that such a response would exhaustively confirm that the “blacklist” would not be applied to Assembly participants.

Mr. A. Gerasymov (Ukraine) said that the list of travel restrictions on Russian parliamentarians had not been an arbitrary decision of the European Union, but rather a response to Russian aggression against the sovereignty of Ukraine.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council took note of the information on future inter-parliamentary meetings contained in document CL/197/13-P.1 and wished to endorse the recommendation of the Executive Committee to verify the necessary conditions for holding the 136th Assembly in Bangladesh.

It was so decided.

Item 14 of the agenda

APPOINTMENT OF TWO INTERNAL AUDITORS FOR 2016

(CL/197/14-P.1 and P.2)

The President referred to the candidatures for the positions of two internal auditors for 2016, contained in documents CL/197/14-P.1 and P.2, which had been received from Mr. A. Giffroy (Belgium) and Ms. S. Moulengui-Mouélé (Gabon). He took it that the Governing Council wished to approve those candidatures.

It was so decided.

Item 15 of the agenda

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(CL/197/15-P.1 to P.8)

The President, referring to the candidatures presented in documents CL/197/15-P.1 to P.8 said he took it that the Council wished to approve the candidatures of Mr. K. Jalali (Islamic Republic of Iran), Ms. C. Cerqueira (Angola), Mr. Tran Van Hang (Viet Nam), Mr. A. Lins (Brazil), Mr. I. Liddell-Grainger (United Kingdom), Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation), Mr. D. E. Ethuro (Kenya) and Ms. G. Eldegard (Norway) to the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Item 4 of the agenda

(continued)

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

(b) On the activities of the Executive Committee

The Secretary General recalled that in 2012 a decision had been taken to send a fact-finding mission to the Syrian Arab Republic. That mission had not yet taken place. Earlier in 2015, an exploratory mission had been conducted, and during its session in Hanoi in March 2015, the Executive Committee had recommended that a full mission take place within two months of end of the 132nd Assembly. Although arrangements had been made and the Executive Committee had identified members to participate, the mission had been postponed for numerous reasons, in particular security. The Executive Committee had recommended that the Secretariat should continue to monitor the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and advise the governing bodies accordingly at the 134th Assembly, and that any mission conducted should involve consultations with all parties to the conflict.

The President said that even without a fact-finding mission, the IPU would remain engaged with the Syrian Parliament, and would meet various protagonists to discuss the situation, either in Geneva, or elsewhere, perhaps Turkey.

Ms. F. Dib (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed concern that the IPU had decided to postpone its mission on security grounds without consultation with the Syrian Parliament. The Parliament had been in direct communication with the IPU and if the Parliament had considered it unsafe to conduct a mission it would have provided the IPU with ample warning. To take such a decision without consultation was not transparent. She urged the Secretariat to communicate first and foremost with the Parliament, who could provide impartial guidance based on the situation on the ground. The parliamentary authorities would do everything in their power to protect the mission were it to take place.

The President gave his assurances that the IPU would continue its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic and that the possibility of a future mission had not been ruled out.

Mr. C. Zerpa (Venezuela) expressed surprise that the mission had not been conducted, since representatives of several parliaments had visited the Syrian Arab Republic without incident. He was concerned that the IPU could be influenced by pressure from the media or the opposition, rather than by its direct consultations with the Syrian Parliament. Venezuela stood ready to assist in any way possible.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.